

Morales is chairman — for now

BY KARL ROSS

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Although he is only expected to hold the job for two weeks, Miami-Dade County Commissioner Jimmy Morales was elected Tuesday to serve as County Commission chairman until the position is filled on a permanent basis.

Morales, a Harvard-trained lawyer, volunteered for the position. He was quickly approved by colleagues in a brief, amicable process that is likely to contrast with the selection of a permanent chair on Oct. 22.

"That was easy," said Commissioner Katy Sorenson, who seconded a motion to elect Morales.

"Be careful what you wish for," added Commissioner Dorin Rolle.

As temporary chairman, he will preside over Thursday's

commission hearing on the county's zoning master plan, an Oct. 15 ceremony swearing in all newly elected and reelected commissioners and the Oct. 22 meeting.

The rules for selecting a permanent chair forbid any commissioner seeking that post to hold the seat temporarily.

Morales had made it known he was not interested in the position because he is running for mayor in 2004 and wants to focus on that race, not running the commission.

Vying for the influential post on Oct. 22 are said to be Sorenson, Rolle, Barbara Carey-Shuler, Dennis Moss, Joe Martinez and Bruno Barreiro. Morales replaced Gwen Margolis, leaving the commission after six years as chairwoman to serve as a state senator.

Prior to a Sept. 10 referendum, the mayor's office appointed commission leaders.